

The following activities on Avi's *The Fighting Ground* come from *Teacher Created Resources*, 1991.

What Is War?

Throughout *The Fighting Ground*, Avi gives us insight as to the nature of war through the eyes of his characters.

For each character below, write something he or she might say about the war.

Jonathan (April 3, 1778, 9:58 a.m.)

Jonathan's father

Jonathan's mother

A Tory

The Corporal

The tavern keeper

Jonathan's father's friend who was killed

The woman at the water well who gave water to the Corporal and to his troop.

The Frenchman

The old Hessian

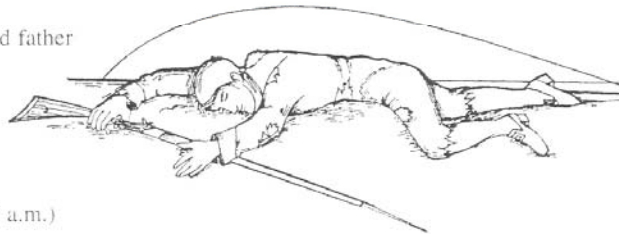
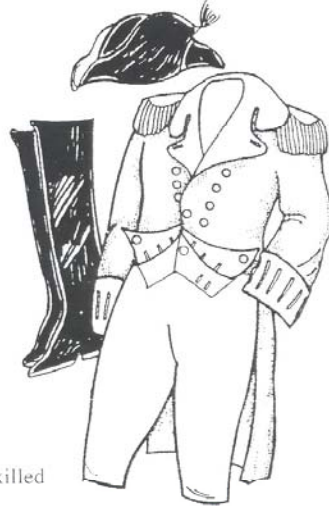
The young Hessian

The French Papists (mother and father to the orphan boy)

The orphan boy

Jonathan (April 4, 1778, 10:30 a.m.)

What does war mean to you? How do you feel about it?
Compose an essay to express your feelings about war.



Make It Be a Battle!

With the help of these quotes selected from *The Fighting Ground*, develop an essay which clearly shows the change that Jonathan has undergone in the 24 hours chronicled in the story.

- 9:58 "Jonathan dreamed of one day taking up a gun himself and fighting the enemy."
- 10:25 "O Lord, he said to himself, make it be a battle. With armies, big ones, and cannons and flags and drums and dress parades! Oh, he could, *would* fight. Good as his older brother. Maybe good as his pa. Better, maybe. O Lord, he said to himself, make it something grand!"
- 1:30 "They stood watching as the band moved off. Jonathan began to find his pride again. They were, he reminded himself, looking for him, for he too was a soldier. Then, realizing he was being left behind, he bolted down the road."
- 2:40 "Sweating all over, hoping no one had seen his clumsy slowness, Jonathan glanced about. No one was looking at him."
- 2:43 "He knew that he had to reload and shoot again, but he stood where he was, confused. Why were things happening so quickly? It was unfair."
- 3:01 "He ran in terror, straining every muscle, pumping his legs, his arms, not daring to look back."
- 3:16 "Deep, racking sobs came then, dry and hard. He felt a terrible loneliness. He did not know what he was or what would become of him. He did not know what to do, where to go. All he knew was pain."
- 4:10 "Jonathan tried to rekindle his hatred, but all he could muster was his desire to stand close to them, to be taken care of. He didn't want to be left out."
- 4:30 "He began to wonder about what truly had happened when they had fought. He knew they had been beaten. It had been so confused, so wrongly done, it was a wonder that they had even stood and fought at all. It seemed so stupid now"
- 8:15 "Gradually, it came to him that he could do anything, anything he chose to do. The soldiers, all asleep, were powerless. He could, he knew, simply walk away and be free. He could stay and be their prisoner. Or—he realized with a quickening sense of dread—he could do what any true soldier would do. He could kill them."
- 8:45 "He tried to pull the trigger. His fingers would not move. He could not shoot."
- 9:00 "As he lay there, he saw himself as he had been that morning, listening to the tavern bell. The bell! He could feel himself—see himself—so eager to go to battle, to be a hero, to destroy the enemy. It seemed such a long time ago! "
- 12:30 "Whose side, he asked himself, was he on?"
- 6:13 "But now his rage had seized him completely, pouring through him. Gripping the gun even tighter, he began pounding it against the stones, again and again and again. The gun stock splintered. The metal bent and burst. Pieces flew in all directions. He fell to his knees sobbing."
- 10:30 "Oh, how glad he was to be there.
And alive.
Oh, alive."

Get Up!

In *The Fighting Ground*, the Hessians speak German. With the help of the translation section in the back of the book, we can understand what is being said.

Here is a dialogue that has been created using the English translation of German phrases from the story. Translate it back into German!

- David:** Get up!
- Jason:** *(sleepily)* What was that?
- David:** Get up!
- Jason:** *(very sleepily)* What's he saying?
- David:** *(loudly)* Come on!
- Jason:** *(confused, and still sleepy)* Where did he come from?
- David:** Come on, hurry up!
- Jason:** A couple more minutes.
- David:** *(losing all patience)* Get up! Come on, hurry up!
- Jason:** *(now quite awake, sitting up)* What's going on?
- David:** That's better. Come here, boy!
- Jason:** What's going on?
- David:** Go on! Open the door!
- Both go outside. It is sunrise.*
- David:** Do you see anything?
- Jason:** It's a beautiful country.
- David:** Right before our eyes.
- Unison:** It's a beautiful country.

Work with a partner to create another dialogue using the English phrases for the German used in the book. See if any of your classmates can translate your words into German.

Steh Auf!

In *The Fighting Ground*, the Hessians speak German. With the help of the translation section in the back of the book, we can understand what is being said.

Here is a dialogue that has been created using the German phrases from the story. Translate it!

- David:** Steh Auf!
- Jason:** *(sleepily)* Was war das?
- David:** Steh Auf!
- Jason:** *(very sleepily)* Was sagt er?
- David:** *(loudly)* Los!
- Jason:** *(confused, and still sleepy)* Woher kommt denn der?
- David:** Los, beeil dich!
- Jason:** Noch ein Paar Minuten.
- David:** *(losing all patience)* Steh auf! Nun komm, beeil dich!
- Jason:** *(now quite awake, sitting up)* Was gibt's?
- David:** Das ist besser. Komm hierher, Junge!
- Jason:** Was gibt's?
- David:** Los! Mach die Tür auf!
- Both go outside. It is sunrise.*
- David:** Siehst du was?
- Jason:** Es ist ein schönes Land.
- David:** Vor unseren Augen.
- Unison:** Es ist ein schönes Land.

Work with a partner to create another dialogue using the German phrases from the book. Share your dialogue with the class. See if your classmates understand what you say!

The Hessians

The Hessians who battled the American patriots were called mercenaries.

1. What are mercenaries?

2. What country was the homeland of the Hessians?

3. What kind of reputation did the Hessians have as soldiers?

4. How did Jonathan feel toward the three Hessians who captured him?

5. How do you think they felt toward Jonathan?

6. Why did Jonathan try to save the Hessians?

7. Would you have tried to save them if you had been in Jonathan's place? Why?



Color this Hessian uniform according to the description given in *The Fighting Ground*.

Where Am I?

In *The Fighting Ground*, Jonathan mentioned these places he either traveled to or was near. Circle as many of these places as you can on this map of New Jersey. Then, below the map, write any directional or mileage clues for these places that are given in *The Fighting Ground*. Use these clues to mark Jonathan's travel route on the map.

Example: two miles west of tavern

Alexandria: _____ Rocktown: _____

Fleming: _____ Snyderstown: _____

Linvale: _____ Trenton: _____

Pennington: _____ Well's Ferry: _____

Put an X on the map where you think the tavern might be.



Listen To Your Parents

Upon hearing the tavern bell calling the men in the area to battle, Jonathan yearned to follow its call. His parents, however, had other ideas about Jonathan's involvement in the fight.

What strong words did Jonathan's father say to him that he chose to disobey?

What advice from his mother did Jonathan pretend not to hear?

Why do you think Jonathan chose to disregard his parents' words?

If you had been in Jonathan's place and felt as he did toward fighting in the war, would you have acted in the same way he did? Explain why or why not.

Under what circumstances, if any, might you disobey your parents?

Circle your position on this scale of obedience to parents.

I always obey my parents.	I obey my parents more than disobey them.	I obey my parents about half the time.	I disobey my parents more than I obey them.	I rarely obey my parents.					
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

On the back of this page, explain your reasons for the position you circled on the obedience scale above.

24 Hours

The Fighting Ground chronicles a full day in the life of a young boy eager to fight in the Revolutionary War. We learn, hour by hour, what Jonathan is doing, feeling and thinking. Because Avi had given us so many details of Jonathan's day, we feel like we are experiencing the war right along with him.

Write an hour-by-hour chronicle of a twenty-four-hour day in your life. Your story could be about a day that holds special meaning for you, like a reunion with favorite friends, a birthday celebration, an unusual family outing, or a significant day for you in sports. Your story could be about a time you were particularly frightened, sad, excited, or embarrassed. You might write about an ordinary day in your life that is filled with everyday things. Whichever type of day you choose to chronicle, be sure to include an hour-by-hour account of what you do, feel, and think.



When you have finished your chronicle, reread it. See if your writing recreates the time vividly for you. If it does not, rework your writing. Include more details. If it does, share your day with a friend or family member. Does this reader feel as if he or she is really there with you? If not, add more description, feeling, or personal observations to your writing. If so, congratulations! You have done a great job!